United Nations E/CN.6/2003/NGO/5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 January 2003

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-seventh session
3-14 March 2003
Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further action and initiatives: (ii) women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Statement submitted by Human Rights Advocates, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

The problem of demand for trafficked women and children and the role of military and United Nations peacekeeping troops in the exploitation of women and children

1. This statement addresses the issue of trafficking in persons and in particular, the issue of demand, the problem with exploitation of women and children by United Nations peacekeeping troops, and the need for education at local levels. Every country in the world is affected by this problem, as virtually every country is either a country of origin, transit or destination for these victims. The importance of this issue is highlighted in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). It calls for full prosecution of crimes against women, increased protection of women and girls

* E/CN.6/2003/1.

03-20612 (E) 270103

during war, more women appointed to peacekeeping missions and involved in the decision-making process at all levels. Furthermore, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, introduced at the December 2000 United Nations conference in Palermo, Italy, signed by 80 of the 121 countries attending the conference and adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/25, emphasizes the critical nature of this growing problem. Trafficking in persons is the third largest source of profits for organized crime, behind only drugs and guns, generating billions of dollars annually.[1]

The problem of demand

2. Though trafficking is driven by both supply and demand, there has been excessive emphasis on the issue of supply. Reducing demand is crucial to any strategy to reduce trafficking in persons. In destination countries, the demand for trafficked persons has increased over the past several decades. This demand has maintained a lucrative business for those who profit from the exploitation of trafficked victims. Trafficking does not require large capital investment, it involves little risk of discovery by law enforcement (and sometimes corrupt local officials are actually complicit in trafficking or turn a blind eye) and, unlike drugs, trafficked victims can be resold and used repeatedly by traffickers.[2]

3. Though poverty and gender inequality make it easier for traffickers to procure young women and children, the buying power of the consumer is the driving force behind the success of the industry. As long as demand remains strong, vulnerable populations will continue to be exploited.[3]

4. Trafficked women generally do not voluntarily enter prostitution. They are most often tricked into the sex industry and coerced into staying. Traffickers often move victims from their home communities to other areas — either within their country but in some remote area, or to foreign countries — where the victim is isolated and may be unable to speak the language or be unfamiliar with the culture. Trafficking victims are acquired in various ways. Sometimes they are kidnapped outright and taken forcibly to another country. Other times they are lured with job offers and false promises of well-paying jobs.[4] Traffickers advertise in local newspapers offering these "good jobs" at high pay in exciting cities. They use fraudulent employment travel and model agencies to lure unsuspecting young women into their networks.[5]

5. Fear among customers of infection with HIV or AIDS leads traffickers to recruit younger girls, some as young as seven, erroneously perceived by customers to be too young to be infected.[6] This past year, at least 700,000 and possibly as many as four million women and children worldwide were bought, sold, and held

[1] Miko, Francis T. and Grace Park, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, United States Department of State: Congressional Research Service Report 98-649 C, p. 3, May 2000.

[2] United States Department of State — Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 2, 5 June 2002.

[3] Family Health International, *Preventing Trafficking in Women and Children in Asia: Issues and Options*, vol. 1, No. 2, p. 4, September 1999.

[4] Miko, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, p. 4.

[5] United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 1, 2002.

[6] Miko, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, p. 5.

against their will in slave-like conditions.[7] Victims are often subjected to cruel mental and physical abuse to keep them in servitude, including beating, rape, starvation, forced drug use, confinement, and seclusion. Once victims are brought into destination countries, their passports are confiscated.[8] Many victims suffer mental breakdowns and are exposed to diseases. They may be denied medical care, and once sick, are sometimes killed.

The role of the military

6. Long-held definitions of masculinity reinforced by the military structure contribute to the continued subordination and exploitation of women. The recent exposure of abhorrent actions by certain United Nations peacekeeping troops, provide an example of the scope of this problem. By the end of June 2002, the United Nations had 46,460 peacekeepers from 87 countries.[9] A 1996 study reported that in some war-torn countries, children have become victims of prostitution following the arrival of peacekeeping forces.[10]

7. During a United Nations mission to Cambodia from 1992 to 1993, the number of prostitutes proliferated from 6,000 to 25,000.[11] Child prostitution grew as infection rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases among Cambodian prostitutes increased demand for "clean young girls".[12] Some say the United Nations mission itself was responsible for the rapid spread and possibly even the introduction of HIV in Cambodia.[13] The civilian population in Cambodia tried to complain about United Nations personnel misconduct and abuses, but were in effect told, that "boys will be boys".[14]

8. A 2002 report from UNICEF and Save the Children accused United Nations troops of exploiting children at refugee camps in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. The very humanitarian aid intended to benefit the population was used as a tool for exploitation.[15] Many girls, some younger than 12, were coerced into having sex with non-governmental organization (NGO) workers and United Nations soldiers in exchange for food, money, shelter, or medicine.[16] They said they'd come to expect this was required of them in order to receive the assistance.[17] Many had several children by the age of 18 and others were infected with AIDS. There was little supervision at these camps and the young victims had little chance of complaining about what was happening to them.[18]

---

[7] United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 1, 2002.
[8] Miko, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, p. 5.
[9] Deen, Thalif, Inter Press Service, *UN Cracks Down on Sexual Exploitation by Peacekeepers*, p. 1, 31 July 2002.
[10] Ibid., p. 1.
[11] Mackay, Angela, Peace News, *Sex and the Peacekeeping Soldier: the New UN Resolution*, Issue 2443, p. 2, June/August 2001.
[12] Ibid., p. 2.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., p. 3.
[15] Redfern, Paul, *UN Troops Named in Africa Refugee Sex Scandal*, The East African, p. 1, 4 March 2002.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

9. In recent genocidal conflicts between ethno-national groups in Bosnia and Kosovo, civilian populations were deliberately targeted in strategies of "ethnic-cleansing" and systemic rape.[19] Further abuse by United Nations peacekeeping troops should therefore be unthinkable, yet United Nations troops reportedly solicited prostitutes in war-torn regions.[20]

10. Individual countries' troops also contribute to demand. For example, the military policy of the United States of America considers sexualized recreation "vital" to maintain troop morale.[21] A Congressional report on the Republic of Korea estimates that of the women in the sex industry, the vast majority are prostitutes around United States military bases.[22] These women are recruited through friends, and promised a good job or lured by prospects of marrying American GIs.[23] During the stay of military forces in the Philippines, around 17,000 women have been prostituted in Olongapo City alone, which is the site of the largest United States military base outside the United States.[24]

The need for education

11. In many countries where trafficking is on the rise, lack of economic opportunities exacerbates this problem. Impoverished families are often prey to trafficking procurement agencies.[25] It is not only the poorest families who are prey to these agencies, but also parents who desire modern comforts and luxuries in exchange for the price of their child,[26] which can range from $400 to as high as $800.[27] Traffickers mislead parents into believing their children will be taught a useful skill or trade, but instead they are enslaved in the sex trade network.[28] The parents think they are being paid for the child, but the amount paid by the trafficker creates a debt bondage that the entrapped child victim must pay off. Moreover, once women become prostitutes, they will always be known as prostitutes and their status will leave them shunned from the very families that disposed of them in the first place. This vicious cycle perpetuates itself and ultimately many victims return to the only trade they know.

12. Women often feel an overriding sense of duty to their families. Hence, they rarely object to migrating to another place for work. The family views this as a beneficial exchange, when in reality the debt bondage system leads to their child never gaining freedom.

13. In Thailand, the Daughters' Education Program (DEP) programme was established to get key community leaders involved in educating families at risk for

---

[19] Crossette, *When Peacekeepers Turn Into Troublemakers*, p. 2.

[20] Ibid., p. 2.

[21] Enriquez, Jean, *Filipinas in Prostitution Around U.S. Military Bases in Korea: A Recruiting Nightmare*, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women — Asia Pacific, p. 3, November 1999.

[22] Ibid., p. 3.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Healey, Margaret A., *Prosecuting Child Sex Tourists at Home: Do Laws in Sweden, Australia and the United States Safeguard the Rights of Children as Mandated by International Law?*, 18 Fordham Int'l. L. J. 1852, 1864 (1995).

[26] *Fordham International Law Journal*, vol. 18, p. 1864.

[27] Vandenberg, Martina, *Markets and Women's International Human Rights*, 25 Brooklyn J. Int'l. L. 141, 149 (1999).

[28] Ibid., p. 1.

selling a child.[29] It goes without saying that trafficking children has serious mental and physical impacts on their development and growth as individuals. Just as the policy for change is well-articulated, so too must their be effective action at the local level, to create sustaining patterns of change within these vulnerable communities.

Recommendations:

14. We urge Governments to research, report on and take measures to reduce the demand for commercial sex.

15. As to the problem with military personnel and United Nations peacekeeping troops, clear codes of conduct and a reinforced chain of command committed to enforcing a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation is crucial. The United Nations itself needs an effective mechanism to ensure full prosecution of criminal conduct by troops, if individual nations fail or are unwilling to punish their soldiers. Training troops on the intrinsic value of their missions and the importance of respect for and protection of the populations they purport to assist is critical.

16. Providing economic and educational opportunities for young girls is a vital component to their salvation from this horrible network. Changing gender perceptions of women's role in society is also crucial in the battle against trafficking in persons. Educating parents on the detrimental effects of selling their children is fundamental to this process.

[29] http://www.thailife.de/wecare/depdc/depdc_visit.html